

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 218931
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S E C R E T STATE 218931

EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEL AVIV 10999 ACTION SECSATE INFO BEIRUT
DAMASCUS JERUSALEM DAED AUG 26:

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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 10999

EXDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PINT, MOPS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: LEBANON'S SYRIAN PRESENCE

REF: A) BEIRUT 4946, B) STATE 215078, C) TEL AVIV 10788

1. AS WE INDICATED REF C, ISRAELIS WOULD FAVOR OUR
EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE ANY THIN-OUT OF SYRIAN TROOPS IN THE
LEBANESE COUNTRYSIDE AS WELL AS IN EAST BEIRUT. IN
RETURN, WE PRESUME GOI WOULD BE WILLING TO USE ITS
INFLUENCE WITH THE MARONITE MILITIAS TO IMPROVE THE
ATMOSPHERE FOR SYRIAN WITHDRAWALS. FOR ITS PART,

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ALTHOUGH THE IDF WOULD PROBABLY NOT STOP ITS INTELLIGENCE-
RELATED OVER-FLIGHTS, THE ISRAELIS MIGHT BE CONVINCED
TO DO THEIR SHARE BY ELIMINATING PROVOCATIVE FLYOVERS
IN ORDER TO ALLOW THE SYRIANS TO GRACEFULLY PULL OUT
SOME TROOPS FROM LEBANON. IF WE, IN CONJUNCTION WITH
SARKIS, CAN EXTRACT AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF A THIN-OUT (WHICH
WOULD SOON BECOME A REALITY), WE WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE

A PEG TO URGE GREATER MARONITE AND ISRAELI RESTRAINT.

2. ON ANOTHER POINT, WE NOTE ALLUSION IN REF B TO REPORTS THAT ISRAELIS CAUTIONING CHRISTIAN MILITIAS TO COOL IT "UNTIL CAMP DAVID ENDS." WE BELIEVE THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD LIKE TO KEEP THE LID ON BEIRUT, REGARDLESS OF DEVELOPMENTS AT THE SUMMIT, TO AVOID FACING THE STARK CHOICES INHERENT IN DEEPER INVOLVEMENT NORTH. WE THINK THAT REFERENCES TO AN ISRAELI "OPTION" IN LEBANON, IF THE CAMP DAVID SUMMIT FAILS OR FOR SOME OTHER REASON, ARE BASED MORE ON UNDERSTANDABLE SUSPICION THAN FACT. IF RELATIVE CALM CONTINUES IN BEIRUT, THE ISRAELIS WILL BE QUITE CONTENT TO HAVE THIS SITUATION CONTINUE AND AVOID GETTING FURTHER SUCKED INTO THE LEBANESE MESS.

3. WE HAVE JUST SEEN STATE 217686. ALTHOUGH CONFIDENTIAL SYRIAN COMMITMENT TO A THIN-OUT IN LEBANON SOMETIME LATER THIS YEAR WOULD BE BETTER THAN NOTHING, SUCH A PRIVATE PLEDGE WOULD BE FAR LESS LIKELY TO PERSUADE THE GOI TO LEAN MORE ON THE MILITIAS THAN A SYRIAN PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENT. LEWIS UNQTE CHRISTOPHER

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